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Message Text

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60
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CU-02 AID-05 MCT-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OPR-02 HEW-04 /071 W
---------- 080836
R 020931Z DEC 76
FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6263

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E.O. 11652:N/A
TAGS: PINT, CE
SUBJECT: POLICE FIRING ON CAMPUS-TENSIONS REMAIN

REF: A. COLOMBO 4216 B. COLOMBO 4372

1. ALL SIX UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES HAVE BEENCLOSED INDEFINITELY, A SIGN THAT TENSIONS STILL REMAIN HIGH IN ACADEMIC CIRCLES OVER POLICE FIRING ON PERADENIYA CAMPUS NOVEMBER 12, WHICH KILLED ONE STUDENT AND WOULNDED ABOUT 40 OTHERS (REF .A). SECONDARY SCHOOLS ARE NOW IN SESSION AND QUIET; THE DEMONSTRATIONS IN THOSE INSTITUTIONS, WHICH CAUGHT EVERYONE BY SURPRISE IN THE DAYS AFTER THE POLICE FIRING, WERE QUICKLY NIPPED BY GOVERNMENT PRESSURE ON SCHOOL ADMINISTRATIONS. ANTI-GOVERNMENT TRADE UNIONS, AFTER TWO SEPARATE AND INEFFECTUAL STRIKES PROTESTING PERADENIYA INCIDENT (REF. B), ARE NOW WATCHING EVENTS FROM SIDELINES BUT WOULD NOT HESITATE TO FURTHER EXPLOIT SITUATION, IF THEY FOUND IT POSSIBLE.

2. THE CRY TO DISMISS THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION, BADIUDDIN MAHMUD, RAISED BY THE PRIME MINISTER'S SON AND OTHERS, HAS SUBSIDED SINCE THE RETURN OF THE PM FROM ABROAD. SHE HAS PUBLICLY CRITICIZED THE COMMUNAL (ANTI-
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MOSLEM) ASPECTS OF ANTI-MAHMUD CAMPAIGN AND APPEARS TO BE

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AT LEAST TEMPORARILY STANDING BEHIND HER CABINET COLLEAGUE.
SHE NO DOUBT REALIZES THE POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES OF GOING
BEFORE THE VOTERS IN NEXT YEAR'S ELECTIONWITHOUT THE
REQUISITE MOSLEM REPRESENTATIVE IN THE CABINET.

3. A SPECIAL ONE-MAN COMMISSION HAS BEGUN HEARINGS ON THE
POLICE FIRING. FROM EVIDENCE PRESENTED ON THE FIRST TWO DAYS,
IT APPEARS THAT MUCH BLAME WILL BE PLACED ON THEN-
CAMPUS PRESIDENT P.W.VITHANAGE, WHO HAS BEE NCRITICIZED BY
BOTH THE VICE-CHANCELLOR OF THE UNIVERSITY
AND THE ADDITIONAL SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, FOR
REFUSING TO HEED THEIR ADVICE. HOWEVER, THERE HAS
AS YET BEEN NO TESTIMONY AS TO WHO GAVE THE POLICE THE
CRUCIAL ORDERS TO 1) DISPERSE THE STUDENTS AND 2) OPEN FIRE.
REED

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